News Release

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Herbicide type, timing can prevent drift damage to cotton

TOPEKA — Farmers in southern Kansas counties who plan to use hormone-type herbicides for broadleaf weed control should use extra care to prevent drift damage to cotton, a crop sensitive to, and easily damaged by, hormone-type weed control products.

"Cotton production in Kansas is increasing," said Gary Meyer, manager of the Kansas Department of Agriculture's pesticide and fertilizer program. "And it's posing some new challenges for producers unfamiliar with its sensitivity."

Hormone-type herbicides are a commonly used group of weed control products known for their low cost and effectiveness at selectively controlling most of Kansas' common broad-leafed plant pests. They include 2,4-D, MCPP, dicamba and picloram, and their widespread use is being associated with damage to sensitive plants, including cotton.

Persistent windy conditions in the High Plains, and the natural volatility of these herbicides, present a challenge to those who use them in close proximity to sensitive plants. When conditions are conducive to chemical movement, sensitive crops a mile or more away can be affected.

To prevent hormone-type herbicide damage to sensitive crops, producers can avoid their use during times of the year when sensitive crops are present and in a susceptible growth stage. Another option is to choose a type of herbicide and control method less likely to drift. Some formulations of 2,4-D are less likely to evaporate and move, while granular formulations may be available that will stay where they are put, as long as there is no potential for runoff. County extension offices may be able to suggest a suitable weed control alternative, as can knowledgeable pest management specialists.

If an alternative to a hormone-type herbicide is not available or practical, a producer should consider waiting for a better time or using nonchemical methods to remove weeds.

The most important step in any pesticide use is to read and follow the product label.

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On the web:

http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/news/sty/2002/cotton_herbicide051702.htm
http://agnews.tamu.edu/dailynews/stories/SOIL/May2501a.htm
http://ipm.ncsu.edu/Production_Guides/Cotton/chptr14.html